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Fifteenth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since the last report of the Secretary-General was issued on 1 November 2010 (S/2010/565).

2. The situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) remained generally stable during the reporting period and the cessation of hostilities established in August 2006 between the parties continues to hold. The parties reiterated their commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), as confirmed respectively in a letter sent to me by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel on 9 February, and in the position paper attached to the identical letters dated 26 January from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the President of the Security Council and me (A/65/708-S/2011/47). The commitment of the Government of Israel and the future Government of Lebanon will be fundamental for the continued implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and for further progress to be made in that respect. Key obligations of the parties remain to be implemented, as described in further detail in the present report. The parties should make every effort to meet their obligations under the resolution so that they may progress from the current cessation of hostilities towards a permanent ceasefire, as called for in resolution 1701 (2006).

3. The divergent positions of the 14 March coalition, led by Prime Minister Hariri, and of Hizbullah and its allies in the 8 March coalition, over the Special Tribunal for Lebanon led to a serious political crisis and paralysis of the Government of national unity for most of the reporting period. On 12 January, the Government collapsed, as 11 Ministers, prompted by a decision of the 8 March coalition, tendered their resignations to President Sleiman. This situation was not conducive for progress regarding the implementation of Lebanon's obligations under resolution 1701 (2006) during the reporting period. Further to constitutionally mandated consultations with all parliamentary groups, President Sleiman requested, on 25 January, that Najib Mikati form a new Government. In a meeting with my Special Coordinator for Lebanon on 28 January, Mr. Mikati expressed his full commitment to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006).

4. The collapse of the Government created a tense political situation, with a number of demonstrations in support of caretaker Prime Minister Hariri taking place

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on 24 and 25 January, mostly in the northern city of Tripoli and in Sunni areas of Beirut. The demonstrations, which included some acts of vandalism, ended as Prime Minister Hariri called for calm.

II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

5. On 18 December 2010, the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations, through identical letters addressed to the President of the Security Council and to me (A/65/663-S/2010/655), transmitted a complaint alleging that Israel had planted two devices for electronic surveillance concealed in artificial rocks in two different locations in the mountains of Lebanon, outside the area of responsibility of UNIFIL, which were reportedly dismantled by the Lebanese Armed Forces on 15 December 2010.

A. Situation in the UNIFIL area of operations

6. During the reporting period, the situation in the UNIFIL area of operations was generally quiet and stable. The overall number of violations and incidents decreased.

7. The Israel Defense Forces continued its occupation of the northern part of Ghajar village and an adjacent area of land north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). On 17 November, the Government of Israel accepted, in principle, the United Nations proposal for a withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from the northern part of Ghajar and its redeployment south of the Blue Line. In this context, my Special Coordinator and the UNIFIL Force Commander have since engaged closely with both parties on the implementation of the proposal. These discussions are continuing. Israeli officials recently informed my Special Coordinator and me that the Government of Israel has made significant progress in addressing the necessary arrangements for the withdrawal and stressed the commitment of the Government of Israel to the implementation of the proposal.

8. Almost daily intrusions into Lebanese airspace by Israel Defense Forces aircraft continued, including an increasing number of fighter jets during the reporting period. These overflights constitute violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and of Lebanese sovereignty. UNIFIL protested all air violations and asked Israel to cease them immediately. The Government of Lebanon also protested the air violations, demanding that they immediately stop. The Government of Israel maintained that the overflights were necessary security measures, citing, inter alia, the alleged lack of enforcement of the arms embargo.

9. In the afternoon of 3 December 2010, the Lebanese Armed Forces informed UNIFIL that during excavations that were carried out by Lebanese workers earlier that day, an explosion occurred in the vicinity of Majdal Silim (Sector West) resulting in the injury of two civilians. The Lebanese Armed Forces immediately secured the area, with the support of UNIFIL. The following day, within the vicinity of the explosion site, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces found what appeared to be the remains of a buried device, having contained electrical wires, circuits and boards, as well as batteries. In a 6 December 2010 letter (A/65/614-S/2010/624), the Government of Lebanon asserted that the incident occurred when Israel detonated listening devices planted inside Lebanese territory once they had been discovered by

Lebanese workers. UNIFIL immediately launched an investigation, seeking access to evidence from the Lebanese Armed Forces. Despite repeated requests, UNIFIL has not been shown either the interview reports citing the testimonies of the two persons injured in the incident, or the remnants of what allegedly constituted an Israeli sensor. Additionally, the Israel Defense Forces was requested to provide UNIFIL with any pertinent information it might have. The Israel Defense Forces informed UNIFIL that it did not have any information related to the incident and could neither confirm nor deny the claim by the Government of Lebanon. The UNIFIL investigation is ongoing, with the aim of establishing the facts regarding the incident and whether a violation of resolution 1701 (2006) occurred.

10. UNIFIL completed its investigation into the 3 September 2010 explosion at a house in Shahabiye (Sector West) and shared the report with the parties in November 2010. Owing to the fact, as stated in my last report (S/2010/565), that possible evidence had been tampered with or removed before the UNIFIL investigation team was allowed access to the incident site, the UNIFIL investigation was not able to determine the cause of the explosion, whether the incident had been caused by the presence of unauthorized arms and related materiel or whether the house had been used for other activities in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006). Israeli officials have questioned UNIFIL's conclusions of the investigation, as, in their view, the available information was sufficient to deduce that, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006), unauthorized weapons, which had been present at the location, had been removed by armed elements. The Lebanese Armed Forces investigation report, which was shared with UNIFIL, concluded that there was no evidence of bomb fragmentation or explosives material residues at the site. UNIFIL is discussing with the Lebanese Armed Forces how best to improve the joint operational response in the event of such incidents.

11. On 12 January, the Israel Defense Forces apprehended a Lebanese shepherd in the vicinity of Rmeish (Sector West). A UNIFIL investigation to establish the nature of the Blue Line violation is ongoing. The shepherd was handed over the following day at the Ra's Naqoura crossing point to UNIFIL, which, in turn, handed him over to the Lebanese authorities. In identical letters dated 28 January 2011 to the President of the Security Council and to me (A/65/709-S/2011/48), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations asserted that in the course of that incident an Israel Defense Forces patrol had violated the Blue Line. There were other ground violations of the Blue Line, primarily inadvertent, by shepherds and farmers tending livestock or working in their fields mainly in the Shab'a Farms and Kfar Shouba areas (Sector East). On a few occasions, UNIFIL observed civilians throwing stones or bottles at the Israeli technical fence in the general areas of Kafr Kila and El Adeisse (Sector East). UNIFIL continued to work closely with the Lebanese Armed Forces to curb such activities and urged the Israel Defense Forces to inform UNIFIL of any violations, rather than taking action. Commendably, both parties cooperated with UNIFIL on 13 November in the rescue of an elderly woman who was trapped in concertina wire in a minefield between the Blue Line and the technical fence near Al Bustan (Sector West).

12. The visible marking of the Blue Line continued slowly within the previously agreed five sectors, comprising a total of 38 kilometres. The marking process requires the clearance of minefields and the disposal of unexploded ordnance in order to create safe access for measuring the coordinates and constructing the Blue Line markers. In the five agreed sectors, 87 markers are in place out of an estimated 171. UNIFIL

deminers have cleared access to an additional 134 points to be marked. Following the special tripartite meeting dedicated to the process of visibly marking the Blue Line on 18 August, both parties signalled their readiness to engage in the process with a renewed commitment to find practical solutions on the ground and accelerate the process. However, since that time, a lack of flexibility and pragmatism in the parties' approach to finding practical solutions to contentious points has resulted in delays. To date, UNIFIL has been unable to find common ground to commence measuring coordinates in Sector 4 or to open up a new sector.

13. The construction of 7 of the planned 11 road links of the Lebanese Armed Forces Blue Line road was completed, with the assistance of UNIFIL engineering assets.

14. UNIFIL observed three cases of weapons' pointing across the Blue Line between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces. When possible, UNIFIL interposed itself between Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces soldiers, seeking to reduce tensions, and protested such behaviour. In addition, on one occasion, an Israel Defense Forces soldier pointed his weapon at a UNIFIL soldier.

15. Cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces remains a cornerstone of implementing resolution 1701 (2006). As called for in Security Council resolutions, efforts between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces to expand their coordinated activities and further develop cooperation continued. The two Forces maintained their respective installations and continued their daily operational activities, comprising patrols, checkpoints and observation points. For its part, UNIFIL conducted an average of 300 patrols per day, in addition to regular helicopter patrols. Joint Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL operational activities also continued, including an average of 14 counter-rocket launching operations during each 24-hour period and 8 daily foot patrols, while operating 18 co-located check points, six of which are on the Litani River. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintained its deployment in the UNIFIL area of operations at the level of four brigades. As at the end of January, two Lebanese Armed Forces battalions left the UNIFIL area of operations to reinforce deployments elsewhere in the country. During the reporting period, the Lebanese Armed Forces established a Civil-Military Cooperation Section at its South Litani Sector headquarters in Tyre.

16. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continued to carry out joint exercises and training activities on land and at sea.

17. With the exception of obstructions detailed below, UNIFIL generally enjoyed freedom of movement throughout its area of operations, carrying out approximately 10,000 patrols each month. On a few occasions, patrols were stopped by local civilians. On 7 December, near Majdal Silim, civilians approached a UNIFIL static patrol in the vicinity of the site of the 3 December explosion referred to above and protested its presence in the area, exhibiting unfriendly behaviour towards the patrol. In an effort to calm the situation, the patrol moved to a different location nearby and continued monitoring the area. On 16 December, during commemorations for the last day of Ashura in the vicinity of At-Tiri (Sector West), a UNIFIL patrol encountered a small group of civilians that grew to over 70 within an hour, showed unfriendly behaviour towards the patrol, removed part of a vehicle antenna and blocked the patrol's movement. Lebanese Armed Forces personnel that had arrived on the scene calmed the situation. To resolve the standoff, the patrol agreed to the demand to hand over its tactical vehicle laptop to the Lebanese Armed Forces,

which was returned to UNIFIL later that day. In the most serious incident, on 1 January, a civilian jumped out of a vehicle onto a UNIFIL patrol vehicle, hit a UNIFIL soldier, snatched his camera and mobile phone from a pocket in his flak jacket and subsequently fled in the vehicle. The Lebanese Armed Forces is investigating the incident. The camera, without its memory card, and the mobile phone were returned to UNIFIL two days later. The UNIFIL Force Commander strongly protested the incident to the Lebanese Armed Forces. In addition, there were four incidents when stones were thrown at UNIFIL patrols.

18. On three occasions, laser beams were pointed at UNIFIL troops, including twice at a UNIFIL helicopter conducting night landings, which temporarily blinded the UNIFIL pilot. To prevent such dangerous actions from recurring, the Lebanese Armed Forces has activated observation posts near UNIFIL helipads.

19. With the exception of the incidents reported above, the attitude of the population and local authorities was generally positive. The Civil Affairs Office and the Civil-Military Coordination Units at the headquarters and sector level maintained close contact with local communities to conduct local level liaison and representation and to monitor social, political and economic developments within the area of operations. Their efforts were also aimed at preventing potential conflicts, at mitigating the impact of the operational activities of UNIFIL on the daily lives of local residents, and at ensuring public understanding and support for UNIFIL activities. The provision of humanitarian and infrastructure support and capacity-building training is an essential element of this outreach effort. Quick-impact projects continued to be implemented through troop-contributing countries, as well as the UNIFIL budget.

20. UNIFIL continued to provide assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces in taking steps towards the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River of an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL, in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006). This remains a long-term objective.

21. The Government of Israel maintains that Hizbullah is continuing to build up its military presence and capacity, including within the UNIFIL area of operations. It has maintained its claims that the incident in Shahabiye on 3 September was caused by the explosion of a Hizbullah weapons depot, confirming its allegations that Hizbullah is storing and maintaining weapons in villages south of the Litani River in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). It also charges that Hizbullah maintains military positions and units inside populated areas in southern Lebanon and that unauthorized weapons are being transferred into Lebanon, including into the UNIFIL area of operations.

22. In cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, UNIFIL immediately investigates any claim regarding the illegal presence of armed personnel or weapons in its area of operations if specific information is received. UNIFIL remains determined to act with all means available within its mandate and to the full extent provided for in its rules of engagement. Under its mandate, UNIFIL cannot search private houses and properties unless there is credible evidence of a violation of resolution 1701 (2006), including an imminent threat of hostile activity emanating from that specific location. To date, UNIFIL has neither been provided with, nor found, evidence of the unauthorized transfer of arms into its area of operations. The Lebanese Armed Forces Command reconfirmed that it will act immediately on

receiving evidence of unauthorized armed personnel or weapons in the area and put a stop to any illegal activity in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006) and relevant Government decisions, specifically those concerning the illegal presence of armed personnel and weapons south of the Litani River. Furthermore, UNIFIL routinely checked previously discovered former facilities of armed elements in the area of operations, including bunkers and caves, but found no indication that they had been reactivated and no evidence of new military infrastructure in its area of operations.

23. UNIFIL encountered individuals carrying hunting weapons in the area of operations during the reporting period. Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL continue to take action to curb all hunting activities, and the Lebanese Armed Forces has detained a number of individuals and confiscated their weapons. On five occasions several of those individuals purported to be hunters were carrying AK-47s. In addition, armed persons and weapons were present inside Palestinian refugee camps in the area of operations.

24. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force continued to carry out its dual mandate of conducting maritime interdiction operations in the area of maritime operations and training the Lebanese naval forces. The Lebanese navy continued to make further progress in successfully compiling and maintaining a recognized local maritime surface picture, especially within its own territorial waters, with the assistance of the Coastal Radar Organization. Since its inception in October 2006, the Maritime Task Force has hailed and queried 35,873 vessels, and the Lebanese navy has inspected a total of 865 merchant vessels identified as suspicious, 56 of which were carried out since my last report. Lebanese navy and Customs officials inspected the vessels to verify that there were no unauthorized arms or related materiel on board and cleared all of them. The Maritime Task Force conducted 31 workshops and 93 at-sea training phases during the reporting period. Lebanese navy personnel continued to improve their ability to conduct operations despite continuing limitations resulting from a lack of an adequate number of vessels to endure severe weather conditions.

25. Incidents along the line of buoys continued to occur in somewhat reduced numbers with Israel Defense Forces navy units dropping depth charges or firing flares and warning shots along the buoy line. The Israel Defense Forces stated that these were security measures employed as a matter of procedure when Lebanese fishing vessels approached the line of buoys. UNIFIL has no mandate to monitor the line of buoys, which the Government of Israel installed unilaterally and which the Government of Lebanon does not recognize. Both parties have raised in the tripartite forum the need for a security mechanism to prevent incidents from occurring in the area of the buoy line. UNIFIL stands ready to assist the parties to address matters related to maritime security, with the aim of minimizing the risk of security incidents.

B. Security and liaison arrangements

26. Tripartite meetings, chaired by the UNIFIL Force Commander and attended by senior representatives of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces, remained an essential forum for regular liaison and coordination between UNIFIL and the parties, as well as a key mechanism to address security and military operational issues related to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). The

meetings also constitute an important mechanism to build confidence between the parties and contribute towards enhancing stability in the areas along the Blue Line. The exchange of fire on 3 August near El Adeisse and the ongoing impasse on Blue Line marking negatively affected the general atmosphere and discussions in the tripartite forum during the reporting period. However, the parties continued to demonstrate their commitment to the forum, which also addressed investigations into incidents and violations of the resolution. Though not endorsing the UNIFIL investigation report into the 3 August exchange of fire near El Adeisse per se, both parties agreed with some key recommendations of UNIFIL to prevent such an incident from recurring, including the importance of marking the Blue Line and the implementation of operational procedures in sensitive areas. While discussions with the parties are ongoing, UNIFIL is reinforcing its deployment in the Kafr Kila and El Adeisse areas.

27. The first formal strategic dialogue meeting between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces took place on 10 November. The Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the UNIFIL Force Commander led the discussion. The Lebanese Government Coordinator with UNIFIL will be the overall coordinator for the Lebanese side; the Deputy Force Commander will guide the process in UNIFIL. Both Forces have established working level entities to drive the process forward. It was agreed at the first meeting that the strategic dialogue forum would jointly prepare its terms of reference and rules of procedure as a matter of priority.

28. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continued their regular interaction at operational and tactical levels through daily liaison by the Lebanese Armed Forces liaison officers located at the UNIFIL Force headquarters and at the sector level, as well as a UNIFIL liaison officer placed at Lebanese Armed Forces headquarters for the South Litani Sector in Tyre.

29. UNIFIL maintained regular and effective liaison and coordination with the Israel Defense Forces. The UNIFIL Force Commander maintained effective relations with his Israel Defense Forces counterparts, as well as with other senior Israeli authorities. UNIFIL continued to place two liaison officers at the Israel Defense Forces Northern Command headquarters in Zefat. No progress has been made in establishing a UNIFIL office in Tel Aviv.

C. Disarming armed groups

30. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias continue to operate in Lebanon outside of the control of the State, in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). The most significant such group is Hizbullah, which asserts that it maintains a substantial military arsenal separate from that of the Lebanese State for defensive purposes against Israel.

31. During the early hours of 18 January 2011, a few thousand unarmed men organized in groups, reportedly militants of Hizbullah, deployed in various parts of Beirut and other cities. The deployment was widely regarded in Lebanon as a show of strength by Hizbullah on the day that the Prosecutor of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon transmitted to the Pre-Trial Judge of the Tribunal his indictment in the case of the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and other persons in 2005. The deployment also happened a few days ahead of the start of consultations by the Lebanese President with all parliamentary groups for the designation of a new Prime Minister.

32. There was no progress during the reporting period in dismantling the military bases maintained by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) and by Fatah al-Intifada, in spite of the decisions taken in this regard by the Lebanese National Dialogue in 2006, reiterated since then by subsequent meetings of the National Dialogue, and by the Government of Lebanon in the ministerial statement it adopted in November 2009. These military bases are outside the control of the Lebanese State, with most of them straddling the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. The bases represent a threat to Lebanese sovereignty and challenge Lebanon's ability to manage its land borders. I have called on the Lebanese authorities to dismantle the PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada military bases, and on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with these efforts.

33. Lebanese authorities point to the good cooperation existing between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Palestinian security officials in the 12 official Palestinian refugee camps in the country. Only one major incident was reported in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon during the reporting period. This involved the assassination in the Ain el-Hilweh camp on 25 December 2010 of Ghandi Sahmarani, a member of the disbanded Jund al-Sham group. Following his murder, a bomb was planted in a building that allegedly belongs to Fatah al-Islam in Ain el-Hilweh; the bomb caused only material damage. Lebanese authorities attributed the assassination to in-fighting between rival groups in Ain el-Hilweh camp.

34. It remains my conviction that the disarmament of armed groups should be achieved through a Lebanese-led political process. Lebanese leaders committed to such a process in May 2008, when they decided to convene a National Dialogue Committee to agree on a national defence strategy, which would have to consider the issue of weapons outside the control of the State. The only session of the National Dialogue Committee called for by President Sleiman during the reporting period, on 4 November 2010, was boycotted by all the representatives of the 8 March coalition, with the exception of Speaker Nabih Berri, who clarified that his participation was in his institutional capacity as Speaker of Parliament, and not as President of Amal Movement. To date, no new meeting of the National Dialogue Committee has been scheduled.

D. Arms embargo

35. In resolution 1701 (2006), the Security Council decided that all States were to prevent the sale or supply of arms and related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon by their nationals or from their territories or using their flag vessels or aircraft. The Government of Lebanon did not report any breach of the arms embargo imposed by resolution 1701 (2006). For its part, the Government of Israel continues to allege that Hizbullah has continued to build up its armaments. During a recent visit by my Special Coordinator to Israel, the Government of Israel reiterated its allegations of significant breaches of the arms embargo across the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. While the United Nations takes these allegations seriously, it is not in a position to verify this information independently.

36. The Security Council, in its resolution 1701 (2006), also called upon the Government of Lebanon to secure its borders and other entry points to prevent the entry in Lebanon without its consent of arms and related materiel. No progress was

made by the Government of Lebanon towards adopting the draft strategy for border management that was developed by the National Coordinator, appointed in March 2010 for this task, in consultation with Lebanon's four security agencies and other relevant stakeholders. On 2 December 2010, my Special Coordinator for Lebanon chaired a meeting of donors providing support to Lebanon for improved border management. Donors agreed to continue to share information and coordinate their projects of support to the Lebanese authorities for border management, while recognizing that the lack of a comprehensive strategy forced them to engage separately with the different security agencies that are involved in border management. Donors also recognized that the lack of an approved strategy rendered funding for these projects more uncertain.

37. Lebanese authorities informed my Special Coordinator that the deployment of security personnel for the management of the border remains unchanged. The Common Border Force, comprising around 700 staff from Lebanon's four security agencies (Armed Forces, Internal Security, General Security and Customs), continues its operations along the northern border with the Syrian Arab Republic. A serious incident involving the Common Border Force took place during the night of 5 November, when one of its patrols intercepted, in the vicinity of the Akkar village of Wadi Khaled, a group of men who were smuggling diesel into Lebanon. The men opened fire on the patrol. In the fighting that ensued two of the smugglers were killed. The following day, a crowd from Wadi Khaled attacked the Common Border Force at the crossing point of Bokaya. The Common Border Force repelled the attack, which resulted in two more casualties among the assailants.

38. On the eastern border, the Lebanese Army continues to deploy around 600 troops, and the Internal Security Forces around 200 personnel, along a stretch of 80 kilometres immediately adjacent to the area of operations of the existing Common Border Force, up to Arsal. The Lebanese Armed Forces is still planning to deploy a third border regiment that would operate between the village of Arsal and the main crossing point of Masnaa.

39. The effective management of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic continues to be adversely affected by the fact that it is neither delineated nor demarcated, and by the continued presence of PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada military bases that straddle the border between the two countries.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

40. The Lebanese Mine Action Centre continues to coordinate humanitarian clearance operations in southern Lebanon through the Regional Mine Action Centre in Nabatiye. The United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre continues to liaise between UNIFIL and the Regional Centre in respect of operations, accreditation and quality assurance. During the reporting period, three additional cluster bomb strike locations were recorded, bringing the total to 1,127.

41. During the reporting period, one incident occurred, involving unexploded ordnance, resulting in two injuries to demining personnel. The incident brings the total number of fatalities and injuries among demining personnel resulting from clearance activities since August 2006 to 62, with 14 fatalities and 48 injuries, while the number of incidents among civilians remains 285, consisting of 30 fatalities and 255 injuries.

F. Delineation of borders

42. The Security Council, in paragraph 4 of its resolution 1680 (2006), strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border, especially in those areas where the border is uncertain or disputed. This would constitute a significant step towards improved management of the border and guaranteeing Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. The Council reiterated that call in its resolution 1701 (2006).

43. No progress was registered during the reporting period with regard to the delineation and demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. The commitments reflected in the outcome of the summit meetings between President Assad and President Sleiman in August 2008 and June 2010 have not yet been translated into practical measures towards border delineation and demarcation. The joint Lebanese-Syrian border committee that is tasked with these matters has yet to convene.

44. Nor was any progress recorded on the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. In spite of my repeated requests, I have not received any responses from the Syrian Arab Republic or Israel regarding the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), issued on 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641).

45. In a letter I received dated 4 January, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon raised the issue of the maritime delimitation of the southern boundaries of Lebanon's exclusive economic zone and Lebanon's right to exploit the resources it contains. The issue has also been raised by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Speaker of Parliament in meetings with my Special Coordinator in Beirut. The Government of Lebanon has, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which it is a party, deposited with me geographical coordinates of its exclusive economic zone, and has expressed concern for the protection of the resources of that area.

46. In the response I wrote to the caretaker Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon on 7 February, I took due note of Lebanon's deposit of the coordinates of its exclusive economic zone. I recalled that, according to the law of the sea, it was expected that the delimitation of maritime boundaries between States with adjacent coasts should be done by agreement on the basis of international law, in order to achieve an equitable solution. I noted that the United Nations does not pronounce itself on the delimitation of boundaries, or on issues related to the entitlement to natural resources, unless it is mandated to do so by a competent United Nations organ or is otherwise requested by all the parties concerned. Yet, I assured the Minister for Foreign Affairs that the United Nations Secretariat stood ready, should the concerned parties request or agree to my involvement, to provide assistance in the delimitation of the maritime boundary, including good offices and technical assistance, such as geographic information system expertise. I further stated that the United Nations Secretariat stood ready to pursue, with the agreement of the parties, all appropriate avenues to ensure that the exploration and exploitation of resources in the respective maritime zones declared by Lebanon and by Israel did not become a new source of friction or conflict between the parties.

47. Regarding the concerns raised on the line of buoys, I reiterated in the same letter the positions stated above in paragraph 25, and I noted that, at the request of the Government of Lebanon, the role of the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force was limited to assisting the Lebanese Armed Forces navy in preventing the unauthorized entry of arms or related materiel by sea into Lebanon. The UNIFIL area of maritime operations was established as a practical means to comply with the request of the Government of Lebanon, and has no bearing on any maritime boundaries that might be established in the area. While noting that UNIFIL did not have the authority to establish a maritime boundary, I fully endorsed in my letter the efforts of UNIFIL to encourage the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Force to utilize the tripartite forum to address matters related to maritime security, including the line of buoys, with the aim of minimizing the risk of security incidents.

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

48. The security and safety of UNIFIL staff remains a priority. Notwithstanding the obligation of all parties to ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL and the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon to maintain law and order, UNIFIL continues applying risk mitigating measures, including safety awareness training for personnel and force protection works for installations and assets while ensuring mandate implementation. The Mission's security plans and risk mitigating measures are reviewed regularly. UNIFIL, the Lebanese authorities and the Lebanese Armed Forces regularly continued to cooperate to ensure that security threats, which the Mission continued to receive during the reporting period, were addressed appropriately.

49. UNIFIL continued to observe proceedings in the Lebanese military court against individuals accused of forming armed groups to carry out attacks against UNIFIL. On 10 January 2011, four sentences were handed out, one in absentia, for prison terms ranging between 10 and 20 years for an attempted attack against UNIFIL along the coastal road in Tyre in July 2007. One of those initially accused was a former leader of Fatah al-Islam, who was killed on 13 August 2010. Court proceedings continue in two cases, with a total of 19 persons accused of possessing explosives and planning and conducting terrorist attacks against the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

50. As at 15 February 2011, the total military strength of UNIFIL was 11,874, including 495 women. The Mission has 341 international and 659 national civilian staff members, of whom 96 and 168, respectively, are women. UNIFIL is also supported by 54 United Nations Truce Supervision Organization military observers of the Observer Group Lebanon, two of whom are women. On 18 November 2010, the Belgian Engineering Company left the Mission. On the same day, a Cambodian Engineering Company arrived in UNIFIL, while a Sri Lankan Force Protection Company arrived on 16 December 2010. Also on 16 December, the French tank company of UNIFIL's quick reaction force left the Mission and was replaced by a

light-armoured vehicles company. The Tanzanian Military Police Company will be fully deployed in early March 2011. The implementation of recommendations of the joint Department of Peacekeeping Operations/UNIFIL technical review, including the recommended adjustments to the force structure, assets and requirements, is ongoing.

51. I am grateful to the Government of Brazil for having stepped forward to assume the leadership of the Maritime Task Force. A flag officer and other personnel of the Maritime Task Force staff deployed to the Mission on 15 February. The Maritime Task Force currently comprises eight out of the operational requirement of nine vessels, and is composed of two frigates, two corvettes, three patrol boats and one supply ship, complemented by two helicopters.

V. Observations

52. I have followed closely the political developments in Lebanon, and I regret that the paralysis of the Government of Lebanon during most of the reporting period prevented progress in the implementation of some of Lebanon's key obligations under resolution 1701 (2006). I trust that the process of Government formation will proceed as smoothly and expeditiously as possible. I call upon the Government to be formed in Lebanon to reiterate its commitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) in its ministerial statement, and to take necessary visible steps towards its implementation. At the same time, I also call on the Government of Israel to maintain its commitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), and to take necessary visible steps towards its implementation.

53. Within this context, I am pleased by the relative stability and calm that prevailed in the UNIFIL area of operations during the reporting period. The commitment of the Governments of Israel and Lebanon to the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006) and the cessation of hostilities has remained important in this regard. I call on both parties to make the most of the new strategic environment that UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has helped to establish in the area of operations to make further progress in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), including respect for the Blue Line in its entirety, and in particular to take the steps necessary to reach a permanent ceasefire.

54. I encourage both sides to make full use of the agreed liaison and coordination arrangements and to work through UNIFIL to find concrete and practical arrangements on the ground to reduce friction, resolve potential disputes and maintain stability. I am pleased by the commitment of the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces to work closely with UNIFIL, including on special operational procedures in sensitive areas along the Blue Line as a means to prevent misunderstandings that could escalate tensions and lead to incidents.

55. I am concerned at the lack of substantive progress in the process of visibly marking the Blue Line and urge both parties to proceed in a constructive and pragmatic manner regarding contentious points on the ground. I recall once again that the identification of the Blue Line in 2000 was solely the responsibility of the United Nations for the practical purpose of confirming the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from Lebanon in compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), without prejudice to future border agreements. I therefore call on both parties to renew their efforts and engage constructively with UNIFIL in the process

of visibly marking the Blue Line, with a view to finding pragmatic solutions that may help in preventing violations of the Line.

56. I urge the Government of Israel to carry out, as soon as possible, the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces from northern Ghajar and the adjacent area north of the Blue Line. I reiterate that I welcome the decision by the Government of Israel to accept, in principle, the United Nations proposal for such a withdrawal and a redeployment of the Israel Defense Forces south of the Blue Line. This withdrawal would be an important step towards the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). My Special Coordinator and the UNIFIL Force Commander will continue to engage closely with both parties to coordinate the implementation of the United Nations proposal. The United Nations intends to continue to work closely with all parties in a process to resolve the long-term status of northern Ghajar consistent with applicable Security Council resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1937 (2010).

57. I am concerned about the continuing high number of violations of resolution 1701 (2006) and Lebanese sovereignty through almost daily overflights of Lebanese territory by the Israel Defense Forces. These overflights exacerbate tensions in the UNIFIL area of operations. They also run counter to UNIFIL objectives and efforts to reduce tensions, and have a negative impact on the credibility of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL. I call once again on Israel to cease immediately its overflights.

58. I am concerned about the incidents, although isolated, that impeded UNIFIL's freedom of movement and endangered the safety and security of peacekeepers. The freedom of movement of UNIFIL and the security and safety of its personnel are integral to the effective execution of its tasks, in accordance with resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1773 (2007). The primary responsibility for ensuring freedom of movement to UNIFIL personnel in the area of operations lies with the Lebanese authorities.

59. The Lebanese Armed Forces remains the strategic partner of UNIFIL in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and in maintaining stability in the UNIFIL area of operations. I am encouraged by the commencement of the strategic dialogue between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces. I continue to urge the Government of Lebanon to ensure that the Lebanese Armed Forces maintain a presence in the south commensurate with the important tasks it must perform there, in line with Lebanon's obligations under resolution 1701 (2006). In addition, I hope that the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL will find ways to strengthen incident management and incident investigations.

60. The Lebanese Armed Forces has continued to act with strong commitment and resolve, and its capacity has been gradually strengthened with the assistance of international donors. I am grateful to those countries that provide critical support in equipping and training the Lebanese Armed Forces, including its navy. I urge the international community to increase its support to ensure that the Lebanese Armed Forces has the capacities and capabilities it requires. As the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and work in the strategic dialogue progress, the continued material and technical support for the Lebanese Armed Forces will become a critical factor for it to gradually assume greater responsibility in the UNIFIL area of operations and in Lebanese territorial waters.

61. I also wish to commend the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander and all the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL who continue to play a critical role in helping to promote peace and stability in southern Lebanon, as well as the Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the staff of his Office.

62. Over the past months, Lebanon has undergone a political crisis over the issue of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which has created considerable polarization in the country. This political crisis brought about the paralysis of the Government of national unity and then its collapse on 12 January 2011. The confrontation between the two main political coalitions has been accompanied by heated rhetoric that has, at times, had disturbing confessional overtones. I call upon Lebanese leaders to work towards the country's continued stability, with full respect for its constitutional institutions and all United Nations resolutions pertaining to Lebanon. I further call upon Lebanese leaders to eschew the use of violence and, in particular, to take all possible measures to prevent the use of weapons by their supporters.

63. The presence of Hizbullah and of other armed groups operating outside of the control of the State continues to pose a serious challenge to the ability of the State to exercise its full sovereignty and control over its territory in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). I continue to believe that the disarmament of armed groups should be carried out through a Lebanese-led political process. In this context, I very much regret that the National Dialogue Committee has been in abeyance since 2009. I believe that the National Dialogue Committee should reconvene as soon as possible. I call on Lebanese leaders to make progress towards the adoption of a national defence strategy that would address armed groups operating outside the control of the State and lead to their disarmament. Furthermore, it is regrettable that again there was no progress in the disarmament of PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada during the reporting period. I reiterate my call on the Government of Lebanon to implement past decisions taken by the National Dialogue with respect to the dismantling of the military bases operated by these groups, and on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with these efforts.

64. All Member States should do their utmost to prevent transfers of arms and related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon without the consent of the Lebanese State. I encourage the Government of Lebanon to further its efforts to control its borders, including by adopting the comprehensive border management strategy that it drafted in 2010. I am grateful to Member States that are providing assistance for the improvement of Lebanon's border management capacity and call upon the international community to support the implementation of Lebanon's comprehensive border strategy once it is adopted.

65. I regret that progress has also been elusive, so far, regarding the delineation and demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such delineation is necessary to enable Lebanon to extend its control and exercise its full sovereignty over all of its territory, as called for by resolution 1701 (2006). I look forward to concrete steps by Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic for the delineation of their border, as called for by resolutions 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006), and in line with the commitments that have been expressed at summit meetings between both countries. I also intend to continue my diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. I call, once again, upon Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to submit their responses regarding the provisional definition

of the Shab'a Farms area that I provided on the basis of the best available information.

66. The dismal situation faced by Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon continues to be a matter of concern. While I commend the first steps taken by Lebanon to ease some of the restrictions that applied to access by Palestinian refugees to the labour market, I call on the future Government of Lebanon, building on the commendable efforts spearheaded by the previous two Lebanese Prime Ministers, and on the donor community to ensure that further measures are adopted to improve the living conditions of Palestinian refugees so that their basic human rights are respected. I am also concerned by the continuous funding shortfalls faced by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) both for its regular programmes, aimed at delivering basic services to the Palestinian refugees, and for the reconstruction of the Nahr al-Bared camp. I urge donors, including countries in the region, to continue, and if possible to increase, their support for UNRWA.

67. A recent survey commissioned by UNRWA and carried out by the American University of Beirut estimated that the number of Palestinian refugees actually present in Lebanon is between 260,000 and 280,000. The survey found that two thirds of camp residents are poor, with almost 7 per cent of them extremely poor, i.e., unable to meet their daily essential food needs. It also revealed worrying results related to elevated unemployment levels, high prevalence of chronic illnesses and nutritive deficiencies and widespread inadequate housing. The amendments to the Lebanese Labour Code and Social Security Law adopted in August 2010 are a first step towards improving the prospects of employment for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Progress in ensuring the full realization of the human rights of Palestinian refugees is without prejudice to resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace agreement.

68. I remain keenly aware that the implementation by Israel and Lebanon of their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006) is greatly influenced by dynamics affecting the region as a whole. Tangible progress in the Middle East peace process would facilitate the implementation of key aspects of resolution 1701 (2006) and would contribute to the stability of Lebanon.

69. I call on both Israel and Lebanon to take the necessary steps to achieve what Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) terms a long-term solution governing their relations. The achievement of that solution cannot and should not be dissociated from the need to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on all relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003). I call upon the parties and all Member States to work decisively towards this goal.